

UTA Program Reflection

This semester was my first semester as a UTA, and I had the privilege of working under Dr. Choi, teaching MATH323; I had just taken that very course under her guidance the previous semester, and I was lucky to TA the same course this semester. Despite having an advantage in performing my primary duties, I ran into a few pitfalls. Overcoming them helped me develop and internalize key TA-ing skills. In particular, I learned to pace myself while grading, and to find ways to make my effort count for more. For example, writing a very good solution set can both help me grade more efficiently and serve as feedback/learning material for my students. I will forever appreciate the freedom that Dr. Choi gave to me with regards to going about my duties, as well as her guidance in certain areas, including the one I just described. More than anything, though, I'm thankful to her for taking me under her wing, as her UTA.

Until sometime mid-semester, I hadn't really realized how little I went to Office Hours. In spite of having had nearly 2 years to explore and get comfortable in college, this was the semester that truly made me understand that taking advantage of resources is the best thing for the whole system. Being a UTA taught me to go to office hours. When I sat in my own office hours, waiting for a student but having none show up, I realized that I was doing the same thing to the UTAs/Professors of the classes I was enrolled in. I definitely wanted at least one student to come in and get something going, even if it was only discussing vague mathematical concepts, or just staying in the room as a study room. When I took the leap to start attending some office hours, I realized that a single hour of enrichment often shifted my view of the class entirely; I might've been miserable or hopeless, but even just simple interaction and easy problems helped lift the clouds. It usually didn't even take 1 hour.

In hindsight, I wish I'd done more, experimented with more activities, and interacted with the class more. I got more and more passionate about TA-ing, learning, and mathematics in general as the semester ran its course. The UTA program created, within me, a strong desire to help students and express my ideas; I will take this desire and realize it as soon as I can, regardless of being in the UTA Program. Moreover, the time I've spent in the UTA Program has helped my

communication skills grow in leaps and bounds, which will undoubtedly help in every endeavor I start upon; in particular, it will help me be a better TA, which I now hope to make a large part of my undergraduate experience.

Although I'm sure that I'll always think of more things I could've done, I'm content with how much progress, academic and personal, I've made through the UTA Program. The time I spent in the Tutoring room was the most transformational time I spent all semester. It developed my communication skills and my calculus skills, but above all, it was fulfilling to help students with material that I fondly remember studying in-person, with my own classmates. The only reason my own office hours didn't feel as fulfilling was my failure to market them to my students. In reaction to that, yet another thing I've learned is to actively do things to advertise office hours.

I have zero doubts that the UTA Program, by virtue of the effort put into it by everyone involved, is a huge net positive to the Math Department. I'm proud to have participated, and I'll apply many more times. Dr. Jones and Dr. Duron were amazing coordinators; they really made the weekly seminar something special. I'm sure the Math Department will always improve on the UTA experience regardless of who's at the helm. I got to take part in an amazingly personalized, reasonably flexible, and very responsive program that made me a better person and student. In conclusion, I strongly recommend that other undergraduates participate in the Math UTA Program. I want to clarify that when I say "participate", I don't just mean "become a UTA"; I mean go to office hours, hop in the tutoring room, send emails to professors & TAs, and talk to people! :)